

RESOLUTION OF BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

DETERMINATIONS AND FINDINGS RELATIVE TO THE CONDITION  
OF THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT URBAN RENEWAL AREA  
AND SUBAREAS AND ACQUISITION AREAS LOCATED THEREIN,  
PROJECT NO. MASS. R-82

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WHEREAS, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (hereinafter called the "Authority") is a public body, politic and corporate, duly organized and existing under Chapter 121 of the Massachusetts General Laws (Ter. Ed.), within the City of Boston, Massachusetts;

WHEREAS, the Authority has, with the approval of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Boston and with financial assistance provided under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, by the Housing and Home Finance Agency of the United States of America, undertaken and conducted surveys, studies, and inspections of that part of the City of Boston within an area known and referred to as the Central Business District Urban Renewal Area (hereinafter called the "Project Area") and described in Exhibit "A", which is attached hereto and made a part hereof, which Project Area includes nine planning sub-areas as indicated on the map entitled "Building Deficiencies - Central Business District Urban Renewal Area R-82," marked Exhibit "B", which is attached hereto and made a part hereof (hereinafter referred to as "Subareas");



WHEREAS, the Authority has prepared a General Neighborhood Renewal Plan for the so-called Downtown Area, which area includes the Project Area, and the Authority is preparing an urban renewal plan for the Project Area and proposes to undertake an urban renewal project therein;

WHEREAS, the Authority has, after due and proper notice, held a public hearing with respect to the Project Area and, at said hearing, received and heard extensive evidence, data, exhibits, views, and opinions with respect to the Project Area and its condition, and with respect to the several Subareas and conditions therein, including (a) statements, data, and statistics presented by officials of the City of Boston concerning fire control problems, traffic control problems, and public utility problems and their respective causes; (b) statements, study and inspection reports, photographs, and other exhibits prepared and presented by members of the staff of the Authority and its consultants concerning the Project Area and the several Subareas and the physical condition and uses of land and structures therein; (c) statements, opinions, and data from expert consultants in the fields of city planning, traffic and transportation, economics and engineering; and (d) statements and opinions from various persons and representatives of various organizations interested in the proposed determinations to be considered by the Authority, all persons



and representatives of organizations desiring to be heard having been afforded an opportunity to be heard by the Authority at said public hearing;

WHEREAS, the Authority has filed with the said Housing and Home Finance Agency an application for a temporary loan for the acquisition of six areas located within the Project Area and shown on the map entitled "Parcel Acquisition Map - Central Business District Urban Renewal Area R-82," marked Exhibit "C", which is attached hereto and made a part hereof (hereinafter called "Acquisition Areas"); and

WHEREAS, the evidence, data, exhibits, views, statements and opinions received by the Authority at said public hearing as aforesaid was relevant to the Acquisition Areas and included, among other things, testimony concerning the acquisition of the Acquisition Areas and existing conditions therein, the necessity to demolish the structures therein, the relocation of the present occupants thereof, and the feasibility of redeveloping such Acquisition Areas;



NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Boston Redevelopment Authority, acting under and pursuant to its powers under the provisions of Chapter 121 and any other powers thereunto enabling, does hereby determine and find the following particular facts:

A. As to the Project Area as a whole

1. Building Conditions

Of the 663 buildings in the Project Area, 235 (35.4 per cent) are deficient, and 194 (29.3 per cent) are sub-standard structurally to a degree requiring clearance as defined under federal law.

For example, the following major structural defects are found in the 474 buildings of which complete interior and exterior surveys were completed.- which buildings . comprise an accurate sample of, and fairly represent, all the buildings in the Project Area:

60 per cent of the buildings surveyed contain inadequate or unsafe plumbing, heating or electrical facilities.

In 65 buildings, there are cracks in the base material of inside walls or loose, missing or broken base material or evidence of major leaks.

The floors of 48 buildings are sagging or pitched.

Roofs are sagging, or out of line, or roofing material is loose, missing, or deteriorated in 93 buildings.

In 81 buildings, the exterior surface of foundations and basements is loose, broken, or deteriorated, or the exterior foundation is deteriorated,



sinking or out of line, or the basement foundation walls are deteriorated, or the columns or piers are loose, missing, or deteriorated, or the framing is split or deteriorated.

87 buildings have exterior walls with missing, or deteriorated masonry or joints or siding or have walls out of plumb or line.

Deficiencies and structurally unsound buildings are present, and in general are distributed evenly, throughout the Subareas and the Acquisition Areas.

## 2. Obsolete Buildings

Approximately 56 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were built prior to 1900; 18 per cent were built between 1900 and 1915; 20 per cent between 1915 and 1930; and only 6 per cent have been built since 1930. Elevators are poorly located, obsolete, dangerous, or, in many cases, nonexistent. Many retail store buildings in the Project Area are small, irregularly shaped, and inflexibly planned.

## 3. Building Vacancies

Unreasonably high vacancy rates afflict buildings of all types throughout the Project Area; some 22 per cent are more than one quarter vacant and almost 11 per cent are more than half vacant. Approximately



two-thirds of those vacancies are in structurally deficient or unsound buildings, and one-third are in standard buildings.

#### 4. Obsolete Street Patterns

The Project Area is comprised largely of irregular, narrow, and substandard streets which are insufficient to carry the normal volumes of vehicular traffic through and within the area. Moreover, the streets taken together do not form a coherent or regular system, so the efficiency of traffic movements cannot be materially improved through the use of any technical devices such as signs and signals. As a result, the critical streets within the Project Area are often clogged with traffic, and such traffic jams overflow into adjoining streets, thereby causing widespread stoppage of vehicular transportation within the area. In addition, an extraordinary percentage of streets within the Project Area have defective and potentially dangerous surfaces and require reconstruction. And a number of streets are poorly lighted because of, among other things, improperly spaced lighting. These and related traffic deficiencies have severely discouraged new commercial development within the Project Area in the last 30 year period, and have been a principal cause of the high rate of vacancies in



existing structures and impede fire equipment.

5. Pedestrian Traffic Facilities

Sidewalks within the Project Area are inadequate in width. As a result, pedestrians frequently must and do walk in the street. This condition not only is unsafe for pedestrians and is a hindrance to movement of vehicular traffic but also causes discomfort and inconvenience which make the Project Area an undesirable place in which to shop, work, visit or carry on business.

6. Other Transportation Deficiencies

There are substantial deficiencies in the supply of parking spaces to service the Project Area - at least 2500 more spaces currently being needed - and there is a virtual absence of off-street loading facilities. These factors have contributed to clogging of the streets and economic depression of the area. In addition, station facilities of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority are seriously deficient.

7. Land Vacancies

During the past 35 years, 46 buildings in the Project Area have been demolished without being replaced. Today there are in the Project Area more



than 70 vacant parcels of varying size of which 25 have been vacant for more than 35 years. There is no indication that the normal operation of private enterprise will generate construction on those cleared areas.

8. Decline of Property Value

The value of real property within the Project Area, as indicated by assessments of land and buildings for real estate tax purposes, has fallen by 23 per cent in less than a decade and a half - from \$280,000,000 in 1950 to \$215,000,000 in 1964.

9. Irregular Lot Sizes

306 parcels within the Project Area, 36.4 per cent of the total, have an area smaller than 5000 square feet and 204 parcels (24.3 per cent) are smaller than 3000 square feet. These small parcels are almost without exception separately owned. This high proportion of very small parcels in diverse ownership makes assembling a site for a modern commercial building at best difficult and in most cases impossible.

10. Inadequate Public Utilities and Fire Hazards

Parts of the sewer system serving the Project Area were installed in the 1800's. Deficiencies in this system are illustrated by recent structural failures of major interceptors. Moreover, the system fails



to separate sanitary sewerage from storm flow, resulting in pollution of Boston Harbor area waters.

Part of the water main system was installed as early as 1853. More leaks occur at joints and more failures occur in water mains in the Project Area than in any other area of the City. Present demands on the smaller water mains may already have reached capacity.

Even the vital high pressure fire service system, which provides the primary protection in the Project Area, lacks sufficient pumping capacity for full requirements. Nor can the high and low service systems deliver full flows for fire protection to all sections of the Project Area.

Although the Project Area is in the "congested value district" designated by the National Board of Fire Underwriters, 74 per cent of the buildings in the Project Area and 86 per cent of the buildings in the Acquisition Areas are not fireproof or fire resistant. Moreover, 51 per cent of the nonfireproof buildings in the Project Area lack sprinkler systems.

The high degree of fire risk in the Project Area is confirmed by actual experience. The Project Area has a yearly average of one significant fire in every 15 buildings, and 4 per cent of those fires are



major ones requiring more than one alarm.

The narrowness and off-set or zig-zag intersections of the streets in the Project Area (see the foregoing section 4) and resultant traffic snarls prevent the passage of fire equipment and thus greatly increase the danger to persons and property presented by such fire hazards.

B. As to the several Subareas

1. Upper Washington Street

The Upper Washington Street Subarea contains 80 buildings. In federal-law terms, 23 of those buildings are deficient and 19 are structurally substandard to a degree requiring clearance; more than half of the buildings in this Subarea have major defects like those set forth in section A.1. hereinbefore. This Subarea is characterized by a mixture of obsolete office structures and surface parking lots interspersed with major historic buildings and some sound office buildings.

One major building was formerly used as a newspaper publishing house and has been almost completely vacant ever since the departure of that business from the building in 1959.

Much of the ground floor retail space in this Subarea



consists of marginal small specialty stores and small bars and restaurants.

The streets are narrow and form many awkward intersections which are a major blighting influence. It is imperative as soon as possible to develop traffic solutions to permit an improved traffic flow, particularly across (and perpendicular to) Washington Street.

The number of multi-level parking facilities is negligible. Pedestrian areas are limited to narrow sidewalks, and the only open spaces are a small yard in front of the old City Hall and King's Chapel Burial Ground adjoining the Project Area.

The factors noted hereinbefore in sections A.1.- A.10. are all present to an extreme degree in this Subarea.

## 2. Ladder Blocks

This Subarea, which is affected particularly by the factors noted hereinbefore in sections A.1., A.2., A.4. through A.10., contains the major portion of the small shops of the retail core.

Of the 100 buildings within the "Ladder Blocks" Subarea, 32 are deficient and 20 are structurally substandard as classified under federal law. The most acute problems of this Subarea are building obsolescence and lack of off-street loading facilities.



### 3. Washington-Summer

It is in this Subarea, which contains the city's large department stores, that the conflict between pedestrians and vehicular traffic (see section A.5. hereof) reaches its peak. Moreover, the Subarea lacks adequate off-street loading facilities for the stores, and has no public areas other than the streets and sidewalks. This Subarea also suffers particularly from the defects noted hereinbefore in sections A.1., A.2., A.4., A.6., A.8., and A.10. Using the federal law terms, of the 35 buildings within this Subarea, 22 are deficient, and three are structurally sub-standard to a degree requiring clearance. Two thirds of the structures are obsolete and impractical for modern retailing uses.

### 4. Church Green

The Church Green Subarea is the most physically blighted part of the Project Area, having particularly the defects noted hereinbefore in sections A.1.-A.4., A.6., and A.8.-A.10. Out of a total of 92 buildings in the federal-law classifications 51 are deficient and 23 are structurally sub-standard to a degree requiring clearance. The building vacancy rate is 13.5 per cent, the streets are irregular and narrow, and the buildings



are 19th century brick and granite commercial structures from four to eight stories high dependent upon marginal retail and service retail establishments on the ground floor.

#### 5. Financial District

The Subarea bounded by Congress, Devonshire, Arch, and High Streets is the least physically blighted part of the Project Area, although it does have, in particular, the defects noted hereinbefore in sections A.1., A.4., A.6., and A.8.- A.9.

The principal deficiencies in this Subarea are in the street pattern - a general lack of traffic control, varying street widths, and an irregular one-way pattern - and the lack of adequate parking spaces. As to physical condition, the federal-law classification of the 34 buildings within this Subarea indicated that three are deficient, and three are structurally sub-standard to a degree requiring clearance.

#### 6. Garment-Chinatown

A small, but active and colorful, Chinese restaurant and shop area centers on the intersection of Beach and Tyler Streets, and Boston's garment industry is now concentrated in less than 20 buildings.

The Subarea which contains the city's garment industry - housed in large masonry loft structures, - and the



commercial sector of Boston's Chinatown is deficient for the reasons stated hereinbefore in sections A.1. through A.10. Physical obsolescence such as lack of off-street loading, modern elevators and proper industrial lighting is commonplace in the Subarea. Although the Subarea is small, it contains 116 buildings; in federal-law terms, half of those buildings (58) are structurally substandard to a degree requiring clearance and 35 more are deficient.

7. Hinge Area

A Subarea which contains a mixture of entertainment and service retail activities may be called the "Hinge Area" because it is a pivotal district where the north-south axis running from North Station through the Government Center, the retail core and the entertainment district intersects the east-west corridor running through Park Square, Back Bay, and Prudential Center to Kenmore Square. This Subarea has all of the defects noted hereinbefore in sections A.1.-A.10. Predominantly obsolete structures characterize the Subarea. High quality legitimate theatres mingle with marginal show bars, historic top rated restaurants abut pizza parlors, numerous parking lots engulf the odd shaped parcels of demolished buildings, and deteriorated structures are masked with



facades, glaring neon signs and delapidated billboards. No new construction has occurred in the Subarea for thirty years, yet there has been continuing demolition to provide parking space and to eliminate dangerously deteriorated buildings. Of the 86 buildings remaining in the Subarea, in federal-law classifications, 35 are deficient and 38 are structurally substandard to a degree requiring clearance.

8. Park Square

Park Square suffers primarily from the defects described hereinbefore in sections A.1. through A.6. and A.10. The Subarea is dominated by a few large structures and numerous weak retail ground floor stores, all of which are overpowered by a wasteful criss-cross of streets. The federal-law classification of the 62 buildings in this Subarea shows that 18 are deficient and 16 are structurally substandard to a degree requiring clearance.

9. Leather-South Station

A 66 year old terminal and railroad yards comprise the South Station property. The rail functions have been continuously declining, resulting in a gross underutilization of valuable downtown property and in turn economically depressing the small retail uses in and around South Station. The loss of trains and passengers over the



past decade is indicated by the following table:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>No. of Trains</u> | <u>No. of Passengers</u> |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1956        | 307                  | 15,431,243               |
| 1959        | 248                  | 8,113,221                |
| 1962        | 120                  | 3,574,917                |
| 1965        | 99                   | not available            |

The property is subject to an outstanding tax liability in excess of \$2,500,000 which impedes any private transfer of the land. The present owner, the Boston Terminal Corporation, which in turn is owned by the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad (itself insolvent) and the New York Central Railroad, is hopelessly insolvent and is not financially able to discharge those outstanding real estate taxes.

The "headhouse" or South Station building is underutilized and has a high vacancy rate. It is an obsolete building unsuitable for economical use by any type of contemporary commercial activity. Moreover, the building is isolated and made virtually an island by the traffic problems of Dewey Square. The leather district is composed of turn-of-the-century, six-to-eight-story loft structures. Since the dispersion of the leather companies, the buildings have been partially occupied by a mixture of wholesale and warehouse activities.

Overall, the Subarea suffers primarily from the defects noted hereinbefore in sections A.1.-A.5., A.7.-A.8. and



and A.10. Despite the great size of the Subarea, there are only 57 buildings, of which, in federal terms, 17 are deficient and 12 are structurally substandard to a degree requiring clearance.

C. As to the Acquisition Areas

1. Corner of School and Washington Streets

The Acquisition Area at the intersection of School and Washington Streets contains one building which is structurally substandard to a degree requiring clearance. That area is also a blighting influence because it blocks Milk Street, causing one of the worst of the traffic deficiencies referred to hereinbefore in Sections A.4. and B.1.

2. Portion of blocks-bounded by-Washington, Franklin and Arch Streets

This area contains no standard buildings. Ten of the buildings are deficient and seven are structurally substandard to a degree requiring clearance. Moreover, this area is a cause of another such traffic deficiency - the pair of right angle turns at Franklin and Washington Streets and at Bromfield and Washington Streets - which impedes crosstown traffic movements and, as a consequence, the flow of traffic on Washington Street.

3. Block bounded by Bedford and Washington Streets, Norfolk Place, and Harrison Avenue Extension

The one building located in this area is a large, obsolete, deficient (in federal terms) retail structure. It has a severe



blighting effect on surrounding properties because of its obsolescence, and it is a contributing cause of the unsafe, congested, and poorly designed streets, and the lack of parking and off-street loading facilities which afflict the immediate vicinity. (See Sections A.2., A.4. - A.6. of this resolution.)

4. Corner of Boylston and Washington Streets

The four buildings in this area, - two of which are deficient and one of which is structurally substandard to a degree requiring clearance - are the cause of a serious bottleneck in traffic where Boylston Street pours cross-town traffic into Washington Street. The absence of a continuous route from Boylston Street into Essex Street is a major blighting factor.

5. Block bounded by Eliot, Carver, and Stuart Streets and Broadway

The one small building to be acquired at this location is in deficient condition and stands in the way of connecting the present Park Square area to the Charles Street extension being developed in connection with the Authority's South Cove Urban Renewal Project.

6. South Station

The railway express building is structurally deficient, the headhouse building is structurally deficient and

economically obsolete. Early acquisition is necessary to preclude further deterioration of adjacent portions of the Project Area due to the blighting influence of those buildings and the vast track area of South Station and the parking-need and traffic problems generated by the Expressway and the Turnpike Extension - which deterioration is occurring and spreading at a rapidly accelerating rate.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Authority, acting under and pursuant to its powers as aforesaid, does hereby find and determine as follows:

(1) That the Project Area is a decadent area in that it is an area which is detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and sound growth of the Boston community because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, obsolete and in need of major maintenance and repair, and because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and, under existing conditions, it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced, and because of a substantial change in business and economic conditions, and because of inadequate light, air and open space, and because of excessive land coverage, and because diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes and obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise;



(2) That the Project Area is a blighted, deteriorated, and deteriorating area;

(3) That each of the Subareas and each of the Acquisition Areas is a decadent area in that it is an area which is detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and sound growth of the Boston community because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, obsolete and in need of major maintenance and repair, and because of a substantial change in business and economic conditions, and because of inadequate light, air and open space, and because of excessive land coverage, and because of one or more of (a) a substantial change in business and economic conditions, (b) that buildings have been torn down and not replaced and, under existing conditions, it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced, and (c) that diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes and obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the areas will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise;

(4) That each of the Subareas and each of the Acquisition Areas is a blighted, deteriorated, and deteriorating area; and

(5) That the Authority is preparing a land assembly and redevelopment plan or an urban renewal plan for the Project Area, which plan will include action with respect to each of the Subareas and each of the Acquisition Areas.

EXHIBIT "A"

The Central Business District Urban Renewal Area is described as follows:

Beginning at the intersection of the easterly sideline of Summer Street and the Center line of Atlantic Avenue;

Thence running northeasterly along the center line of Atlantic Avenue to a point of intersection with the center line of Congress Street;

Thence turning and running in a northwesterly direction along the center line of Congress Street to a point of intersection with the extended southerly sideline of State Street;

Thence turning and running in a westerly direction along the southerly sideline of State Street to the southeast corner of the Old State House;

Thence turning and running in a northerly direction along the easterly property line of said Old State House to the northeast corner of said property;

Thence turning and running in a westerly direction along the northerly property line of said Old State House to a point of intersection of said property line extended with the southerly sideline of Court Street;

Thence running in a westerly direction along the southerly sideline of Court Street to a point of intersection of said sideline with the extended easterly property line of City Hall Annex;

Thence turning and running in a southwesterly direction along said property line to a point of intersection of said property line extended with the northerly property line of City Hall;

Thence turning and running in westerly direction along said property line to the westerly property line of City Hall;

Thence turning and running along said property line to a point of intersection of said property line with the northerly sideline of School Street;

Thence turning in a westerly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the westerly sideline of Tremont Street;



Thence turning and running in a generally southerly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the extended southwesterly property line of 150 Tremont Street;

Thence turning and running in a southeasterly direction along said property line and the southwesterly property line of 7 Mason Street to a point of intersection of said property lines with the westerly sideline of Mason Street;

Thence turning and running in a southwesterly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the extended southerly property line of 162 Tremont Street;

Thence turning and running in a northwesterly direction along said property line to a point of intersection of said property line extended with the westerly sideline of Tremont Street;

Thence turning and running in a generally southerly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the northerly sideline of Boylston Street;

Thence turning and running in a generally westerly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the westerly sideline of Arlington Street;

Thence turning and running in a generally southerly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the center line of Stuart Street;

Thence turning and running in a generally easterly direction along the center line of Stuart and Kneeland Streets to a point of intersection of said center line with the extended westerly property line of The Boston Terminal Corporation.

Thence turning and running in a generally southerly and then westerly direction along said property line and the extended southerly property line of The Boston Terminal Corporation to a point of intersection of said property lines with the easterly sideline of the Service Road of the John F. Fitzgerald Expressway;

Thence turning and running in a southerly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the northerly sideline of the Broadway Bridge;

Thence turning and running in a generally southeasterly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the approximate bulkhead line on the southerly side of the Fort Point Channel;

Thence turning and running in a generally easterly or northeasterly direction along said bulkhead line to a point of intersection of said bulkhead line with the easterly sideline of Summer Street;

Thence turning and running in a northwesterly direction along said sideline to a point of intersection of said sideline with the center line of Atlantic Avenue, which is the point and place of beginning.



MEMORANDUM

October 14, 1965.

TO: Boston Redevelopment Authority

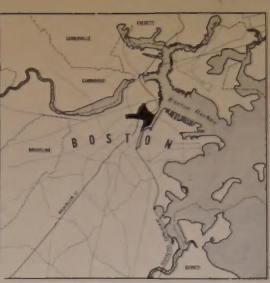
FROM: Edward J. Logue, Development Administrator

SUBJECT: Determinations and Findings Relative to the  
Condition of the Central Business District  
Urban Renewal Area and Subareas and Acquisition  
Areas Located Therein, Project No. Mass. R-82

The Authority has previously received a copy of the proposed determinations and findings concerning the existing conditions within the Central Business District Urban Renewal Area. These are the proposed determinations concerning the eligibility of the area as a whole for urban renewal treatment as well as the findings concerning the proposed early acquisition areas. The Authority received in evidence at the October 7 public hearing numerous reports, statements, and studies concerning conditions within the project area, many of which were previously presented or made available to the Authority.

These studies indicate that the Central Business District area is eligible for urban renewal treatment, and I urge the Authority to approve the attached resolution.





PARCELS TO BE ACQUIRED & CLEARED

NUMBER OF BUILDINGS:

WITH DEFICIENCIES 2/

SUBSTANDARD REQUIRING CLEARANCE 2/

WARRANTING CLEARANCE TO REMOVE BLIGHT 0/

PARCEL ACQUISITION MAP

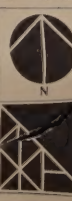
DATE 4/12/65

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

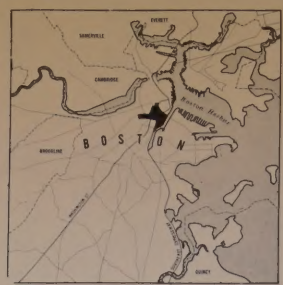
URBAN RENEWAL

AREA R-82

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY







PROJECT BOUNDARY

NUMBER OF BUILDINGS WITH DEFICIENCIES

SUBAREA BOUNDARIES

BUILDING DEFICIENCIES

DATE: 4/12/65

CHECKED BY: [Signature]

SCALE: 1" = 100'

DATE: 4/12/65

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

URBAN RENEWAL

AREA R-82

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY